



Resource #10: Untimely Death of Judith Carter Henry

The following has been adapted from an unpublished manuscript, *"Some Events Connected with the Life of Judith Carter Henry,"* from the files of Manassas National Battlefield Park:

On Sunday, July 21, 1861, Mrs. Judith Henry, her daughter Ellen, and hired colored girl, Lucy Griffith, were living at Spring Hill Farm with Hugh [one of Mrs. Henry's sons] coming & going frequently to look after them. Hugh had established a school for boys in Alexandria and had special pupils even in summer. He was not at home on this day, but John [another of Mrs. Henry's sons], who had ridden down from Loudoun just to spend the day was....When the battle of that day began on the opposite hill across Young's Branch, shots from the cannonading were coming threateningly near, the family first considered trying to get Mrs. Henry, who was bedridden from the infirmities of age, with soldier help, removed to "Portici," the home of Mr. Robert Lewis, one mile s.e. of Henry home; but in the growing confusion this was out of the question. There was a spring house to the s.w. of the house in a depression which seemed less exposed. Here they did carry her, only to have her beg to be taken back to her own bed. This was done as soon as it was seen the spring house was no safer than the house.

The hall in front of the two downstairs rooms was entered by both Union soldiers and Confederates. A Union soldier was shot in this hallway by a Confederate, and fell almost at Ellen Henry's feet. When Ricketts' battery shelled the house, as he himself testified before a Congressional Committee the following year, to drive out the Confederate sharpshooters, the bed on which Mrs. Henry lay was shattered, she was thrown to the floor, being wounded in neck, side, and one foot partly blown off. She died later in the afternoon or early evening. Ellen Henry sought refuge in the big chimney to the fireplace during the bombardment and her subsequent deafness was attributed to injury to her eardrums from the violent concussion produced by the shelling. Whether John was in the house during the shelling or not was never stated, but since he was unhurt, it is presumed

Manassas / Resources

Resource #10: Death of Judith Carter Henry (cont'd)

that he was outside when the bombarding began. Many years after the events of the day, an old man visiting the battlefield [said] that he was walking through the yard sometime after the close of the battle noting the many dead who had fallen fighting around the house when he came to a man lying face downward; and as he came up to this man, the man raised his face and said "They've killed my mother."

Questions:

1. In spite of the approaching battle, Mrs. Henry was reluctant to be taken from her home. Why do you think she wanted to stay in such a dangerous area?
2. Why did Union troops open fire on the Henry House?
3. If you were the Union battery commander, would you have given the order to fire on the house? What if you thought civilians might be inside?
4. Despite the damage to their house and their horrifying experience during the battle, the Henry family remained in the area. How do you think their lives were affected by what had happened across their fields?
5. Although the Henrys stayed in the Manassas area following the battle, others moved away. If you had lived on the battlefield, would you have stayed or left? Why?

From the NPS website, at

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/12manassas/12facts3.htm>

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/12manassas/12visual1.htm>

Photo of Henry's destroyed house on Battlefield and illustration of house